

adolescence, lack of sane living, jazzed emotions and pressure from gas-bloated stomachs. There is profit in "curing" such "heart diseases," and the supply of such patients is being promoted by too much cheap publicity.

Time will take care of this fad as it does of all others.

Physicians can help by informing the public of the facts in a dignified way, and by discouraging circus posters, headlines, pictures in colors of bleeding hearts on magazine covers, and other methods of soap-box orators. What is the poor patient to do when one group of "doctors" scatter firebrands of fear, and another group tell him of the dangers and consequences of "fear complexes"?

THE NARROWING FIELD OF LIBERTY IN PERSONAL AND FAMILY HEALTH

Growing numbers of medical editors and medical authors are pointing out the increasing encroachments upon individual and family health liberty by the expansion of bureaucratic, corporation and other methods of organized practice. Medical organizations are becoming aroused, and some of them are taking action. This is hopeful, both in the interests of physicians and, more particularly, in the interests of the health of our citizens.

Corporations and other associations may not practice medicine legally in several states, and yet government, the greatest organization of all, ignores its own laws. The national government offers "free" (paid for out of taxes) individual medical service to many millions of people through nearly a score of departments and bureaus, conducted for the most part by nonmedically trained individuals holding their positions by political preferment. By dividing the country into districts, the population into classes and according to "previous condition of servitude," age, sex, occupation, infirmities, etc., they have the country very well covered with hospitals, clinics, health centers and correspondence courses operated by a surprisingly large retinue of employees of surprising varieties of attainments. They are nurtured by publications issued at public expense, some of which are essentially advertising matter, and by hordes of office and traveling agents on salaries.

National corporations, insurance, life extension; magazines with their medical departments; fraternal organizations; clubs, health and hospital associations and what-not urge all citizens to utilize their quantity-production medical services and live to be a hundred.

Mail-order "doctors" strain the resources of the postal authorities to handle their tons of medical advice and consultations by mail, and many of them also have local and traveling agents who are "high-pressure" salesmen.

State governments are also entering more and more into the practice of personal health through numerous bureaus and organizations; and wherever and whenever children or other citizens are brought together in crowds for examination, diagnosis, "inspection," "preclinical diagnosis," advice or other form of periodical medical or health service, one or all of several consequences ensue.

The doctors, nurses, teachers, technicians, clerks

or voluntary health workers who do the examining or give advice to the individual jeopardize the influence of the family doctor and thus introduce another disturbing element into the home, and threaten the faith of the individual in his health counselor.

The doctor who thus avails himself of the chance to examine another doctor's patient is all too frequently inclined to find, do, or advise something calculated to disturb the patient's faith in his former doctor, if not in all doctors, a faith that is still further jeopardized through incompetent medical service by incompetent persons.

There are people—plenty of them—who believe the substitution of impersonal medical service by government and private corporations for the personal service that characterizes present methods of the practice of medicine is desirable, and their conduct is with that end in view. Such opinions are not supported by much accumulated experience, and as an experiment it is fraught with many dangers.

The vast majority of physicians are opposed to the principle for sound reasons. The usual answer is that "of course doctors are opposed to state and corporation practice for selfish reasons." While this may be the motive of some, most physicians know that the socialization—governmental or otherwise—of medical practice would not decrease the private work of physicians who elected to continue to serve on a purely personal basis. It would practically force many young physicians to get their experience on a salary until their reputations warranted their changing to a private status. The ranks of such service would prove a haven for many doctors who for one good reason or another are not able to make a living in private practice. Some doctors also would prefer an assured salary to the greater risk of compensation on a fee basis and the greater energy necessary to succeed in the latter field. Salaried positions do not appeal to most doctors nor most people who need doctors' services. This is shown by the constant difficulty in securing enough doctors for the Army, Navy, Public Health, Veterans' Bureau, and similar dignified medical services. Many good doctors do go into these services, enjoy their work and make enviable names for themselves. That service of this kind is not fully appreciated by many who are entitled to it for nothing or only a nominal fee, every doctor in private practice knows full well.

Herein lies a great danger in extending official public health service so as to include personal health service for individuals, "free" alike to rich and poor. Some public health doctors thereby endanger their influence in real public health matters and they invite a public unrest, which is likely to be reflected in deficient appropriations even for their most important work.

The great promise of public health is not likely to be fulfilled as public medicine for individuals, but rather in exploring new fields and in more intensive action in those things calculated to prevent disease and promote the health of masses of people, leaving the field of personal health to collaborating personal health doctors.